
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The term "environment" in its broadest sense refers to all the external dimensions--social and economic as well as physical--which affect the life of an individual. This element focuses on that dimension of traditional concern to urban planning, and recently of increasing concern to the public--the quality of the physical environment, natural and man-made.

The visual form of a community's physical environment should be comfortable, educational, rich in variety and highly identifiable, expressive of the community's functions and social life, and capable of being shaped by its inhabitants. The primary goal in this area of concern is the improvement, restoration, and protection of the quality of the natural and built environment. All of this is taken into account in identifying the opportunities for improvement of the visual environment.

The environment of any community is more than the sum of the homes, shops factories, schools and parks. The maintenance and improvement of the natural and built environment do much to determine the quality of particular neighborhoods and communities to preserve their distinct identities.

To many individuals, the image of the community they are most familiar with is the motorist's view as he passes through. The lack of landscaping on the perimeter of roadways, the barrenness of residential and commercial subdivisions and the seemingly endless areas of pavement are frequently expressed concerns. Residential development establishes the dominant environmental character of Navajo. Relatively uniform house size and design, parcel area and site layout--a situation typical of many postwar developments --typifies much of the community. New approaches to site and building design, however, have provided some interesting variety--an example being the San Carlos townhouse apartments at Jackson Drive and Golfcrest Avenue.



Visual clutter is a major environmental problem. The numerous signs, billboards, telephone and electrical distribution poles and lines, and television antennas are distracting and unattractive. The problem is most evident upon entering the community on Mission Gorge Road from Interstate 8.

Signs are examples of visual nuisances that create a poor environmental image of a community and its character. Often, these signs are concentrated to appeal to the eye of the motorist.



A clutter of signs proliferates in many of the commercial areas. The signs are unsightly, disorganized, and generally degrading to the entire community. Mission Gorge Road is the most notorious example of an area blighted by excessive signs. The attempt to compete with larger, brighter, and gaudier signs not only detracts from the appearance of the area but diminishes the effectiveness of signs. The problem of sign clutter is also prevalent in the shopping centers.

Other clutter is produced by elements placed in the street areas. The undergrounding of overhead wires should continue at the most rapid pace possible, with the goal of complete elimination of such wires within a foreseeable period of time. Every other element in street areas, including public signs, should be examined with a view toward improvement of design and elimination of unnecessary elements.



Both public and private efforts in the installation and maintenance of landscaping should be increased. In residential areas, side yards and setbacks provide the best opportunities for landscaping visible in public areas. If no such space exists, then trees should be placed in the sidewalk area, preferably in the ground rather than in containers. Care should be taken to select species of trees suitable to each location. The most visible points, such as street intersections, should be given special

attention. Other unused opportunities for landscaping exist on exposed banks, usually along roadways. Where it is feasible, these should be planted and maintained by the owners of the land.

In addition to landscaping, other features along the streets add to the comfort and interest of pedestrians. Sidewalk paving and furnishings, if designed in a unified way, make walking more pleasurable. Gentle changes in level have the same effect. In commercial areas, continuous and well-appointed shop windows and arcades are invitations to movement. Little used alleys and easements can be improved as walkways, and new promenades put through blocks in new developments. Screening of the sand and gravel and industrial areas along Mission Gorge Road through the use of walls, fences and substantial landscaping can greatly enhance the appearance of these areas.

OBJECTIVE

TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY AND AMENITIES OF THE NAVAJO COMMUNITY.

PROPOSALS

Programs

- Grading and landscaping standards should be improved. Hillside cuts, in particular, must be better controlled to preserve the natural topography.
- Define acceptable noise rating levels for the use of motorized equipment and aircraft.
- Restrict heavy truck traffic to certain areas.
- Develop new programs and practices for the reclamation of waste water for secondary uses.
- Develop new programs and practices for the disposal or recycling of garbage, refuse and other solid wastes.
- Establish restrictions on odor-producing activities based on wind direction, atmospheric temperature, topography and proximity to built up areas.

Buildings - Structures

- Create, through design, harmony between natural features and urbanized areas and activities.
- Encourage an orderly transition of height, density, scale and arrangement of buildings to preserve the identity of each element as well as the cohesion of the whole.
- Promote the coordination of building groupings to foster neighborhood and community identity and unity.
- Encourage an overall quality of design by using materials, color and texture to give identity and focus to groups of structures within the urban landscape.
- Cable television should be encouraged throughout the study area to help eliminate the clutter of individual antennas. Future planned residential developments should include no more than one master antenna to serve all units.
- All telephone and electrical distribution lines should be underground where technically and economically feasible, in accordance with systematic long-range program establishing priorities for the Navajo area.

- Develop points of visual relief in the urban landscape through the use of open spaces and landscaping, building setbacks, building materials, location of public facilities, and street and right-of-way design and maintenance.
- Improve the appearance of public and private special use properties such as flood control channels, power line rights-of-way, mineral extraction operations, and water storage areas.
- Improve flood control and storm and sewer installations.
- Protect distinct areas and communities from intrusion and encroachment of incompatible uses.
- Minimize nuisances to adjacent uses through the control of noise, odor, pollution, vibration and glare, and the screening of unaesthetic land uses.
- Implement development controls on urban development in accordance with the Mission Trails District Design Manual, which provides that no structure shall exceed four stories and in no case shall a structure exceed fifty feet in height.

Signs

- The size, placement, design and height of signs should be controlled through reasonable and uniform regulations utilized to prevent encroachment on the visual form of the community's physical environment.
- Signs should not project above the eave of the building to which the signs are attached.
- Signs should not protrude over the sidewalk or street, but be placed against the face of the building. Freestanding signs should be prohibited.
- Signs for the various businesses in any shopping center should be attractively clustered upon a marquee near the entrance to the center.
- Signs with moving parts or flashing lights should not be allowed.
- Signs should be limited in size based upon the linear feet of street frontage.
- Signs on trucks, autos, or other vehicles used to circumvent sign regulations should be restricted.
- Permitted signs should be kept in good appearance and repair. Nonconforming signs should be removed.

Landscaping

- Use trees and shrubbery along heavily traveled streets to help lessen effects of traffic noise.
- Support feasible soundproofing of residential, commercial and industrial structures.
- Mission Gorge Road industrial development should be properly screened with landscaping and other suitable means. The area should be made presentable to the community and motorists on Mission Gorge Road because of its importance as an entry to the community, the Old Mission, and Mission Trails Regional Park.
- Establish financing programs, such as assessment districts, to provide for and maintain landscaping in the public right-of-way for major streets within the community.
- The following streets should receive first priority for such right-of-way improvements: Navajo Road, Mission Gorge Road, College Avenue and Waring Road. These improvements should include the planting of street trees as well as landscaping of the center median.

Natural

- Utilize natural elements as points of visual relief in the urbanized areas.
- Establish and maintain an open space system to conserve natural resources, preserve scenic beauty, and define urban form.
- Create and preserve open space in and around built-up areas to aid in lessening the effects of high noise levels.
- Strengthen environmental pollution control measures. Support research into causes and prevention of environmental pollution.
- Prevent deterioration of natural watershed areas.

The development of an attractive community is one of the first considerations of the residents of the Navajo community, not only as a matter of personal pride and stabilization of property values, but in realization of the natural attractiveness of the area as a desirable place to live.